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A Brief History of the Filipino Flag

BY

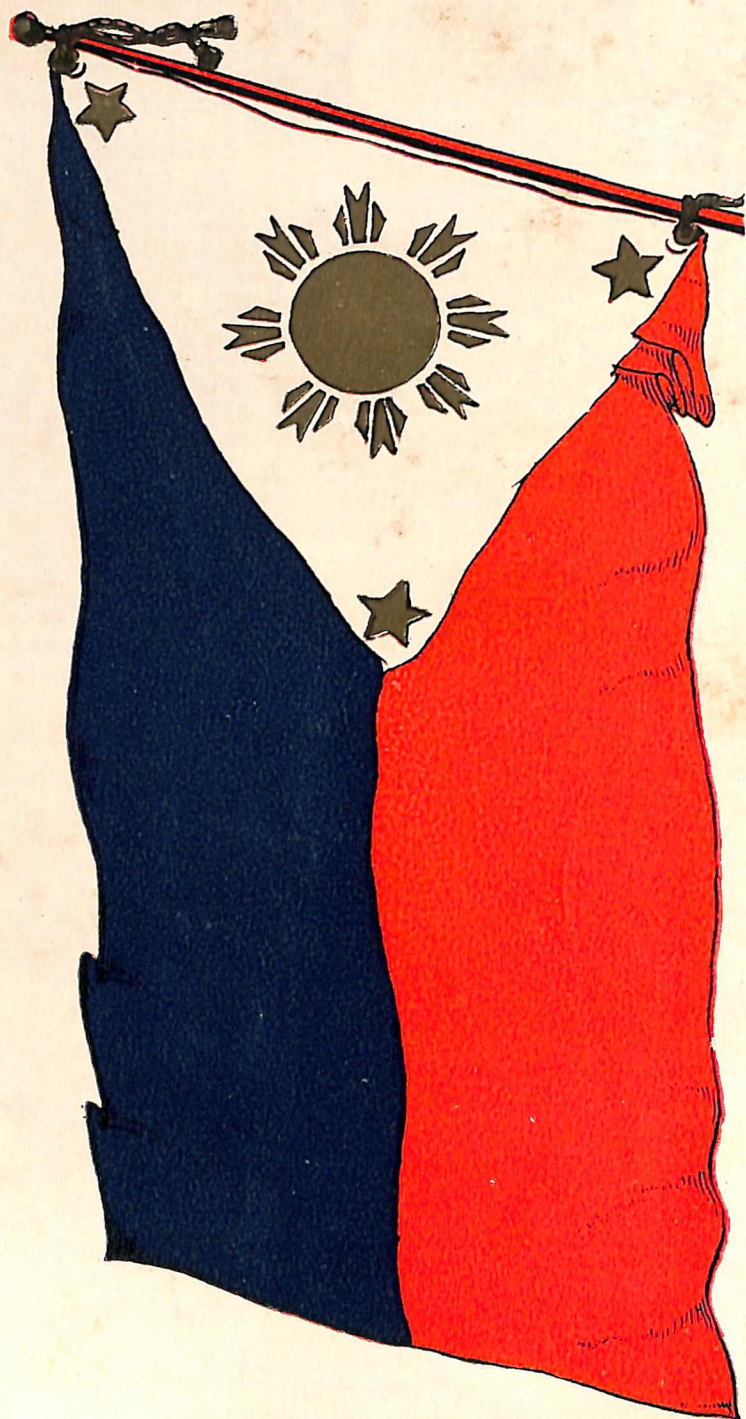
PURA VILLANUEVA KALAW

Author of "The Filipino Women in Politics," "Osmeña—from
Newspaperman to President," "The Consumers'
Coöperative in the Philippines," "Condiments
for the Indigenous," "The Coconut Cook Book,"
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PURA VILLANUEVA KALAW

DEDICATION

TO MY BELOVED children
MARIA, TEODORO, PURITA,
and EVELINA, I dedicate this
work, to engrave in their hearts
a devotion to serve our country
and to love her flag.

PURA VILLANUEVA KALAW

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Flags

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A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE FILIPINO FLAG

By PURA VILLANUEVA KALAW



AT THE CLOSE of the Nineteenth Century, Spain believed that she still had the men and the might with which to hold the Philippines. On the strength of this belief, she continued to commit abuses on a hapless people. Intelligent and liberty-loving Filipinos, among them Jose Rizal, Graciano Lopez Jaena, Marcelo H. del Pilar, and the representative to the Cortez, Ventura de los Reyes, fought within the limits of the law, and tried to win in Madrid liberal reforms for their country. With this aim in view, Jose Rizal and Marcelo H. del Pilar founded the "Liga Filipina," an association for propaganda. Besides these activities, they sought the help of responsible men in Spain who could influence and bring about changes in the way the Philippines was governed. They published "La Solidaridad," a fortnightly paper, and contributed articles to Spanish newspapers on the abuses of the Spanish clergy in the Islands.

Failing to secure the desired reforms, Andres Bonifacio, together with Ladislao Diwa, Teodoro Plata, Ildefonso Laurel and others founded in Tondo 1892 a secret society which aimed to put to an end by force the Spanish domination. The society was named, "Kataas-taasan, Kagalang-galang Katipunan." The Katipunan adopted a flag. This flag depicted a red rectangular field with the letters "K.K.K." at the center, placed

in a row, or arranged as in an equilateral triangle. The three "K's" stood for the first three letters of the name of the secret society. The Katipunan flag was unfurled in Balintawak on August 26, 1896. From then on it followed the valiant rebels into the battlefields wherever they went. It became the symbol of our people's desire to unite and free themselves from the oppressive chains of Spain. The flag of the Katipunan had undergone several changes and through this evolution finally emerged the present Filipino Flag.

DIFFERENT REVOLUTIONARY FLAGS

Aside from the Katipunan flag, several others were later adopted by the various Filipino military leaders that joined the revolt. The flag that Llanera and his men used had a black background with skull and cross bones and the letter "K" in the middle. Gregorio del Pilar, hero of Tirad Pass, chose a tricolor flag, which resembles the present Filipino flag. Pio del Pilar's flag had a triangle on the left side of a red rectangular background. In the middle of the triangle was a sun with eight rays and in each of the three corners was the letter "K." The women of the Katipunan prepared Bonifacio's own standard which had a sun with an indefinite number of rays placed above the three "K's."

On August 30, 1896, the first official change in the Katipunan flag was made. The Magdaló revolutionary leaders abolished the three "K's" in the middle of the red rectangular flag and substituted the old Tagalog letter "I" with eight rays, the letter retaining its original meaning in the Katipunan with the eight rays emblematic of the first eight provinces to revolt, namely: Manila, Bulacan, Pampanga, Nueva Ecija, Tarlac, Batangas, Laguna, and Cavite.

The next authorized change in the flag took place at Naic Conference on March 17, 1897 when the Military leaders, acting as a legislative body, decided that, thereafter, the official flag of the Government and its

forces would be the same as that used by the Magdalós, with the addition of the Sun, symbolizing liberty.

The Spaniards then realized that they could not conquer the Filipinos. A truce was declared. The Treaty of Biak-na-bato was signed by General Emilio Aguinaldo and his men on December 27, 1897. The terms of the treaty called for the surrender of all arms and for the dispersion of the Filipino rebel forces. General Artemio Ricarte ordered the lowering of the Filipino flag and the turning in of all arms. It signified the end of the Filipino revolt for the time being.

THE FIRST FILIPINO NATIONAL FLAG

The Filipino revolutionary leaders had agreed to leave the Philippines and had gone to Hongkong. As the Spaniards did not carry out all the terms of the Treaty of Biak-na-bato, the exiled leaders formed there the "Junta Patriótica," a council whose purpose was to organize again the Filipino forces, in order to put an end, once and for all, to the Spanish rule. Headed by General Emilio Aguinaldo, the Council devised and adopted a new flag to represent an independent Philippines. This first Filipino national flag was made by Mrs. Marcela Agoncillo, wife of Don Felipe Agoncillo. It was brought to Cavite by General Aguinaldo on May 19, 1898. Aguinaldo said that in designing this new flag many considerations were taken into account. The white equilateral triangle on the left side of the flag had a bursting Sun in the center with eight rays to represent the first eight provinces that had risen in revolt against the Spaniards. The three-five pointed stars placed in each corner of the triangle symbolically represented the three geographical divisions of the Philippines—Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao. The flag had a field of blue and red. Red symbolized the willingness of the Filipino people to shed their blood in the defense of their country, while "the color blue was thoughtfully introduced by its designer for the reason

of its universality." During peace time, blue was to be placed on top and on days of war, red was to be the one. This was the general idea behind the first Filipino National Flag.

On June 12, 1898 this flag was formally proclaimed political symbol of the Philippine Republic. At the Declaration of Independence in Kawit, Cavite, to the tune of the National Anthem composed by Julian Felipe, the officers swore to defend the Republic to the last drop of their blood. The flag lost its significance of sovereignty with the end of the short-lived Philippine Republic, but it continued to be the flag of a united people.

FORBIDDING THE USE OF THE FILIPINO FLAG

During the early years of American rule, the display of the Filipino colors produced such agitation that the Philippine Commission, on August 23, 1907, passed Act No. 1696, otherwise known as the Flag Law, which forbade the display of the flag anywhere, even in Filipino homes.

When the first Philippine Assembly was formed, leaders of the nation, among them Fernando Ma. Guerrero, Teodoro M. Kalaw, editor of "El Renacimiento," and Lope K. Santos, editor of "Muling Pag-silang," began a campaign for the restoration of the use of the Filipino flag. From 1907 to 1914 various bills were introduced in the Assembly seeking to restore the use of the Filipino flag, but all were of no avail.

A NEW ERA

The victory of the Democratic Party in the elections of 1914 in America brought a change in the way the Philippines was to be governed. Honorable Francis Burton Harrison, a more liberal governor-general, inaugurated a New Era. He at once Filipinized the government of the Philippines.

THE REPEAL OF THE FLAG LAW

Governor-General Harrison read before the Fifth Philippine Legislature a message pointing out, among other things, the uselessness of the Flag Law. Governor-General Harrison said in effect:

"The time when suspicion and distrust was rife among the two races has passed. Act No. 1696 known as the Flag Law was promulgated when feelings ran high, but all that is now gone. I am now asking you to repeal the Flag Law, so it will not be a crime anymore for Filipinos to display their flags. A new generation has sprung up among them whose only interest is to see their people set up their own government."

Senator Rafael Palma at once presented a bill in the Senate providing for the repeal of the Flag Law. Success came after five days when the said bill was signed by Governor-General Francis Burton Harrison.

THE GOVERNMENT ADOPTS AN OFFICIAL FLAG

The Philippine flag was displayed again in public offices and buildings on October 30, 1919. The whole nation celebrated the unfurling of its flag. In Manila and in every town, even in the remotest barrios, processions, feasts, and dances were held to mark the people's rejoicing.

The same Legislature, in its special session of 1920, issued a law adopting an official flag for the Government of the Philippine Islands, prescribing rules for its use, and providing penalties for the violation of these rules.

This is a copy of the law:

FIFTH PHILIPPINE LEGISLATURE

Special Session of 1920

[Act No. 2928]

AN ACT TO ADOPT AN OFFICIAL FLAG FOR THE
GOVERNMENT OF THE PHILIPPINE ISLANDS,

PRESCRIBE RULES FOR ITS USE, AND PROVIDE PENALTIES FOR THE VIOLATION OF SAID RULES.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the Philippines in Legislature assembled and by the authority of the same:

SECTION 1. The flag commonly known as the Philippine flag is hereby adopted as the official flag of the Government of the Philippine Islands and shall be used publicly, in the place next to that belonging to the flag of the United States, to represent the Government of the Philippine Islands both on sea and on land.

SEC. 2. Whenever the Philippine flag is hoisted in public jointly with the American flag, both shall be hoisted and lowered at the same time. The American flag shall be placed above the Filipino flag when both are in a vertical line, and to the right of the latter and at the same height when hoisted in a horizontal line. The Philippine flag shall be accorded the same honors and respect which the existing laws and regulations prescribed or may hereafter prescribe for the American flag.

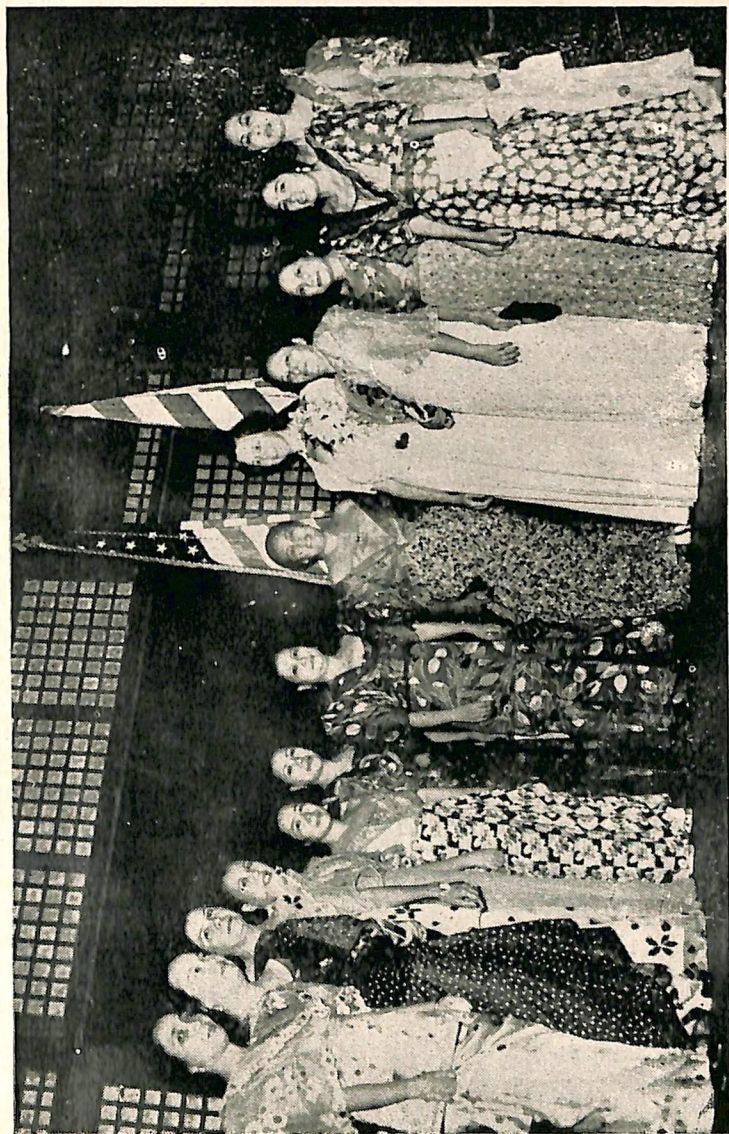
THE FLAG OF THE COMMONWEALTH

On November 15, 1935, the Philippine Commonwealth was inaugurated. The Filipinos elected Manuel L. Quezon as President and Sergio Osmeña as Vice President. When the Commonwealth was well on its way, Executive Order No. 23 was issued giving the description and specifications of the Filipino flag.

The flag officially recognized by the Commonwealth with its specifications are as follows:

1. The maximum length of the flag is twice its width; the minimum length is twice the altitude of the equilateral triangle.
2. Any side of the equilateral triangle is as long as the width of the flag.

In making these changes our leaders had in mind a Filipino flag floating to the left of the American flag, hence, similar to it in size and proportion.



The President Mrs. Pura Villanueva Kalaw, and the officers of the "League of Women Voters of the Philippines," Mesdames Paz Reyes Cuernpocruz, Crispina Malvar Meer, Virginia Puyat Macaraeg, Asunción A. Perez, Maria C. Luna, Paz Policarpo Mendez, Belen Enrile Gutierrez, Mrs. Juan Alano, Mesdames Isabel Artacho Ocampo, Josefa Jara Martinez, and Salud Fabella Unson at the residence of Mrs. Francis B. Sayre in 1941. The American Flag occupies a prominent place in the center of the picture.

THE USE OF THE FILIPINO FLAG WAS PROHIBITED

The Filipino flag and the American flag were still waving over Manila on January 2, 1942. The Imperial Japanese Army entered Manila on that day and these flags were hauled down. As a symbol of its victory, the Rising Sun was raised over the land.

On April 22, 1942 the following news item appeared in the Tribune:

[JAPANESE] ARMY FORBIDS USE OF FILIPINO FLAG

Military Ordinance No. 3

(April 22, 1942)

Ordinance concerning prohibition of use of the Philippine flag. It is hereby prohibited to hoist the existing Philippine flag for the time being.

*Commander-in-Chief of the
Imperial Japanese Forces*

Upon being questioned that evening, Jorge B. Vargas, Chairman of the Executive Commission, explained that the order was only temporary, in compliance with the order of the Japanese Supreme Command. He said further: "I understand the reason behind the order is to prevent misunderstanding such as what happened in the occupied parts of China, and also because the Filipino flag was used by the USAFFE against the Japanese Army."

THE FLAG OF THE JAPANESE-SPONSORED
PHILIPPINE REPUBLIC

On June 16, 1942, Premier Hedeki Tozyo announced before the Imperial Diet the desire of the Imperial will to grant the Philippines its independence within the year. To carry out this eventuality, the Supreme Command appointed a Commission to draft the Constitution of the coming Philippine Republic. On September 12, this Commission announced that the flag to be used by the Philippine Republic, in size and design was to be

like that hoisted at Kawit by General Emilio Aguinaldo in 1898.

Hon. Jose P. Laurel, President-elect of the Republic, appointed a special committee of women leaders headed by Mrs. Pura Villanueva Kalaw to prepare the flag to be unfurled on the inauguration of the second Philippine Republic. More than 100 women contributed towards the making of this Filipino Flag. Upon its completion, the women presented it to President Laurel, accompanied by the following letter:

"The Hon. JOSE P. LAUREL

"President of the Philippine Republic

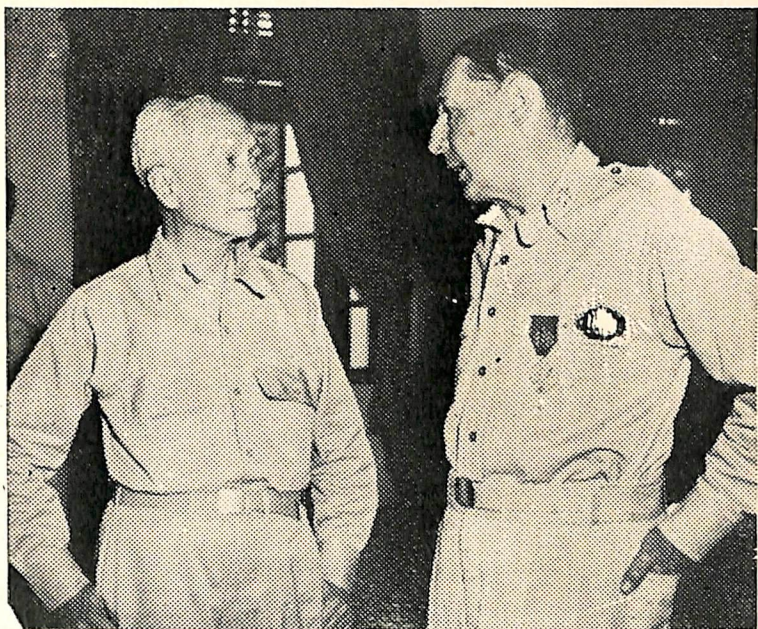
"YOUR EXCELLENCY:

"With all our hearts we present to Your Excellency the flag to be unfurled on the inauguration of the Philippine Republic. In the making of this flag women from different regions and of different faiths united together like sisters, heeding the example that its shadow is cast equally upon everyone, discriminating against none.

"This flag was made through their voluntary contributions as the expression of the noble aspirations of the Filipino women. In making this symbol of our love for our country, we are conscious of the great obligation as well as the great honor granted to us. Happiness, power, respect, inherent in the flag of any nation were translated directly into the hopes, the love, the deeds, and the sacrifices that make our well-being.

"The Filipino women busied themselves night and day, heedless of recompense, in order to help give success and happiness to the land. In a short time, our country will take her place among the nations of the world, thanks to the foresight and greatness of your Commission. The Constitution which they have drafted grants equal rights and privileges to man and woman alike. For this, the women of the Philippines will always be grateful.

"Feelings pure and sincere will always remind us of this great kindness which shines in your life



General Douglas MacArthur and President Sergio Osmeña at the inauguration of the Philippine Commonwealth at Tacloban, Leyte, on October 23, 1945 when the Filipino Flag was unfurled for the first time after the liberation.

and attracts like a lodestone. At this moment, we are aware of deep emotions and souls overflowing with happiness and hope. We staunchly believe in our future and we shall face it united, proud, and unafraid.

"Never have we been forsaken by God in our endeavors. And we pray God that our Republic may succeed and that this holy Flag given by this group of women may float forever, alone, over this land, as long as the world shall stand.

"PURA VILLANUEVA KALAW
"Chairman, Women's Flag Committee"

THE FILIPINO FLAG WAS HOISTED AGAIN

On October 14, 1943 the second Philippine Republic was inaugurated. *La Vanguardia*, a daily in Spanish reporting on the occasion, had this to say:

"General Emilio Aguinaldo, President of the first Philippine Republic at Malolos, and General Artemio Ricarte were given the honor to hoist the Filipino Flag with the assistance of Marina Y. Vargas, wife of the Chairman of the Executive Commission, Aurora Aquino, wife of the Speaker of the House of Representatives and Pura Villanueva Kalaw, Chairman of the Women's Flag Committee. While the flag was being hoisted, the Philippine National Anthem was played.

"The flag which had not been seen for two years was slowly raised into the calm blue sky, with the early morning sun overpowering emotion gripped the hearts of the thousands of people who had come to witness the occasion. Many cried openly. Women, magistrates, and officials wiped surreptitiously the tears that had somehow escaped from their eyes. The hymn died down and the flag calmly waved again before their eyes."

As many as 50,000 small Filipino flags had been distributed for the occasion, but not a single torn flag was found on any roadside thrown by careless hand.

In the two years that they had not seen their flag, the Filipinos had learned to love it deeply and well.

On October 20, 1944, General Douglas MacArthur with President Sergio Osmeña returned to the Philippines. How they landed in Leyte after fierce bloody battles with the Japanese armies occupying the Island is now history. The victory of the American forces with the help of Filipino guerrillas will be told in song and story. Three days later the civil government was inaugurated at the Capitol Building in Tacloban and the Philippine Commonwealth was restored after three years of exile. On that occasion, with solemn and appropriate ceremonies, the Filipino flag was hoisted again, side by side with the American flag. From Leyte, the two flags went side by side to liberate places until the whole country was free again for the Filipinos.

The real historical date for our flag was July 4, 1946. On that glorious day, promised us by the United States of America, the Philippines achieved Independence. As a symbol of this freedom, the ceremonies to inaugurate the new Republic included a descent of the Star Spangled Banner and a hoisting of the Sun and Stars, now and forever, God willing, destined to fly alone in liberty.

Naturally, the American and Filipino flags which were going to be used on that occasion would have significant value and meaning. This it was appropriately planned to have fitting ceremonies held in connection with the confection of those flags.

The American flag, the last to fly over the Philippines, was made of silk taffeta. The red and white stripes of the flag were sewed together by representative American women. The 48 stars representing the 48 states of the nation were left undone for the Filipino women to finish them. On a sunny afternoon at the Malacañan Reception Hall at the call of the First Lady of the Land, Mrs. Trinidad de Leon Roxas,



Photo taken by X'or

The Filipino Flag as it waved alone on the Inauguration of the Republic of the Philippines, on July the 4th, 1946.



Photo taken by X'or

At the Grand Stand, Luneta.—The historical moment after the Filipino flag has been raised to the skies alone—as a symbol of Philippine Sovereignty on July the 4th, 1946. Sitting, from left to right are: Hon. Millard Tydings, President Manuel Roxas, American High Commissioner Paul V. McNutt, Vice-President Elpidio Quirino, and General Douglas MacArthur.

gathered Mrs. Manuel L. Quezon, Mrs. Sergio Osmeña, Mrs. Jose Avelino, wife of the President of the Senate, Mrs. Eugenio Perez, wife of the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the presidents of different women organizations to sew few stitches placing the symbolical stars on the American flag. It was my good fortune to be chosen a member of this group in representation of the League of Women Voters of the Philippines. Truly, it was a very solemn occasion.

The Filipino flag used on our Independence Day was made by the management of the United States Department and brought over here by Ambassador Paul V. McNutt as a gift of the United States Government to the people of the Philippines.

On the great day itself, July 4, 1946, at the climax of the ceremonies at the Luneta, the Filipino flag was hoisted by President Manuel Acuña Roxas to the tune of the Philippine National Hymn which somehow seemed doubly more beautiful and thrilling, playing as it was for a real Philippine Republic, hoped for and awaited by millions of Filipinos for generation, fought for and died for by Filipino blood in the fields of battle. The gun salute that followed made the occasion more impressive.

The Filipino flag has at last achieved its destiny. At last, and forever, God willing, it will be flying alone and free.

THE LAST AMERICAN FLAG ON PHILIPPINE SOIL

By PURA VILLANUEVA KALAW



AT NOON of June 26, 1946, I was surprised by a messenger from Malacañan Palace, bringing me a square envelope with the official seal of the Philippines. I opened it with curiosity. The contents read: "Mrs. Roxas requests the pleasure of the company of Mrs. Pura Villanueva Kalaw at tea on Sunday, the 30th at 5 p. m., at Malacañan Palace to assist in the making of the American flag to be furled on July 4, 1946."

I was flattered by the honor. The flag was going to be the last to fly over the Philippines. It was to descend after having flown over this country for almost half a century. Vice-President Elpidio Quirino had told me a few days before that the three First Ladies who had presided over Malacañan Palace, Mrs. Manuel L. Quezon, Mrs. Sergio Osmeña, and Mrs. Manuel Roxas, assisted by several representative Filipino women, were to give the finishing sewing touches to the silver stars on the last American flag. After the ceremonies of the inauguration of the Philippine Republic, this historical flag was to be sent to the United States as souvenir from the loving Filipino people.

I went to Malacañan on the appointed day. Dr. Encarnacion Alzona came a little afterwards, and soon after her, Mrs. Jose Avelino, wife of the President of the Philippine Senate. Mrs. Roxas, smiling sweetly, met us at the entrance of the Reception Hall. There was a huge American flag spread over the table at the center of the room, right under the chandelier. As it



Photo taken by X'or
At Malacañan Palace—Mrs. Manuel Roxas, Mrs. Sergio Osmeña, Mrs. Pura Villanueva Kalaw, and Mrs. Rosario Acuña Picazo embroidering the stars of the last American Flag on Philippine soil.

was a dark cloudy afternoon, the red of the flag did not seem as bright as it should be. On the small tables scattered in the room were conveniently placed cut-out stars ready for sewing. More women came in, among them Mrs. Eugenio Perez, wife of the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Mrs. Hermenegildo Atienza, wife of the Representative from the South District of Manila, and Mrs. Jose Zulueta, wife of the Secretary of the Interior.

Mrs. Roxas now took some silver thread and began embroidering on one of the stars. At her right sat Mrs. Manuel L. Quezon and at her left Mrs. Sergio Osmeña. The three ladies, seated in a row, seriously and busily sewed on for some time. The guests stayed in the background and watched them perform the symbolical gesture of affection for America. Several photographers started taking pictures. The charming mother of the President, Mrs. Rosario Acuña Picazo, was also present. She looked young and strong in spite of her 76 years. She was anxious to do her bit for the flag, too. Everybody was busy.

It was discovered that the supply of needles was not enough. I had to wait quite a while for my turn at sewing on the historical stars. Mrs. Roxas seemed oblivious of the crowd. Although she was courteous and amiable to all, her attention was on her sewing. As the Newsreel cameramen could not take pictures inside the room because it was already dark, the sewing group had to move out towards the Malacañan veranda, facing the Pasig River. It was a most lively gathering. The three First Ladies, the wives of senators and representatives, the presidents of various women's organizations, women leaders, and educators were gathered to do honor to America and were very glad about it. When the finished stars were placed in their positions on the flag, Mrs. Roxas took me over to see it in all its beauty. It was made of silk taffeta. It looked so beautiful that I stayed a little longer near it,

looking at it in retrospect of how my country has advanced and progressed under the shadows and shelter of this flag. When the American flag was first raised over the Philippines in 1898, the Filipino women were not allowed to enter, much less to stay within the walls of Sto. Tomas University, then the only university in the Philippines.

Now, what a change! In the hall sewing earnestly were Mrs. Francisca Tirona Benitez, President of the Philippine Women's University, Mrs. Natividad Almeda Lopez, woman judge of the Municipal Court of Manila, Mrs. Asuncion Perez, Director of the Welfare Bureau, several women lawyers, writers, newspaperwomen, pharmacists, and doctors. It is a blessing from America that the women have been allowed the same educational opportunities as the men, and it is also a credit to the Filipino women that they have overcome their backwardness in education and have achieved in 48 years what it took other women from other countries centuries to achieve.

The momentous occasion was concluded with a lavish *merienda* for the tired ladies. President Manuel Roxas himself came in for a few minutes to thank everyone for her work. All of us answered him in our hearts: It was a pleasure and an honor.





Photo taken by X'or

At Malacañan Palace—Mrs. Consuelo Salazar Perez, Mrs. Nita Leuterio and Mrs. Pura Villanueva Kalaw sewing the stars of the last American Flag on Philippine soil.

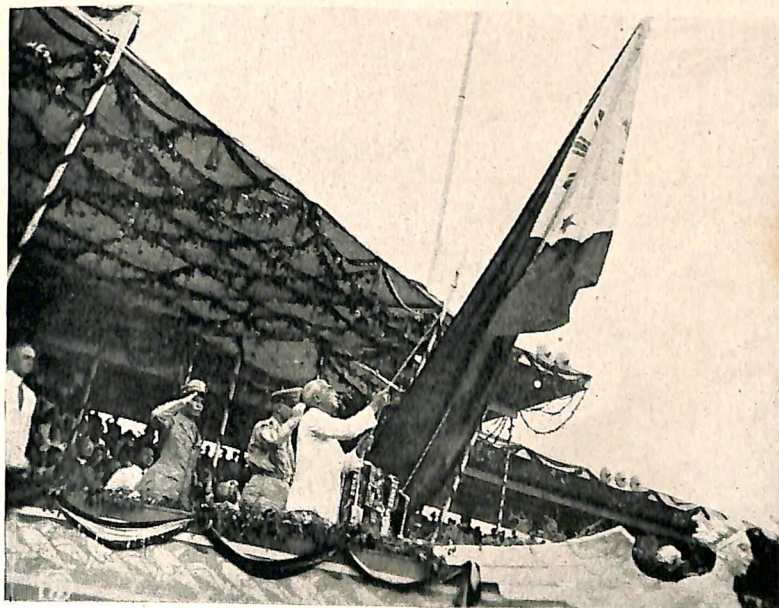


Photo taken by X'or

The American High Commissioner Paul V. McNutt at the Flag Ceremony on the Inauguration of the Republic of the Philippines on July the 4th, 1946.

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